



LIHEAP2021

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

National Grantee Virtual Training Conference

March 1-3, 2021

DEA STAFF BIOSKETCHES

Lauren Christopher

Director

Division of Energy Assistance (DEA)

Lauren S. Christopher is the Director of the Division of Energy Assistance within the Office of Community Services (OCS) at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). She oversees the federal administration of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). LIHEAP provides more than \$3 billion in annual funding to state, territory and tribal governments to assist households with their home heating and cooling bills, as well as some weatherization of homes. Previously, Ms. Christopher served as the Energy Program Operations Branch Chief which included supervising the federal review of annual LIHEAP funding plans, complaint investigation, compliance reviews, and the provision of training and technical assistance to LIHEAP grantees. Ms. Christopher received her J.D. from the Catholic University of America – Columbus School of Law, and her Master of Public Policy and Bachelor of Arts in political science from American University.

Iris Curtis

Supervisory Auditor (DEA)

Iris recently became the Supervisory Auditor within the Division of Energy Assistance, but has worked in DEA for almost 10 years. Iris works on conducting compliance reviews, reviewing audits relating to the Single-Audit report (A-133), serving as a Contracting Officer Representative and other fiscal areas. Iris has over 26 years of experience in auditing, accounting and analytics. Iris previously worked for the Department of Energy as an Auditor on block grant programs using ARRA funding. Prior to that, Iris worked as an Auditor and an Energy Industry Analyst with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission performing financial audits of electric, gas and oil pipeline companies. Iris received her Bachelor of Science in Accounting from Lane College and is a Certified Fraud Examiner with the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners.

Peter Edelman
Energy Assistance Program Analyst (DEA)

Peter R. Edelman is analyst for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Mr. Edelman serves as a key advisor on the allocation of Federal LIHEAP funds and on the determination of need for home-energy assistance.

Mr. Edelman joined HHS as an intern with the HHS Emerging Leaders Program. During his internship, Mr. Edelman researched performance measurement and coordinated recovery efforts for the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes.

Prior to joining HHS, Mr. Edelman obtained his Master's Degree in Public Policy and Management from the H. John Heinz III School of Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University. Mr. Edelman obtained a Bachelor's of Science degree in Molecular Biology from the University of Wisconsin—Madison.

Sharnice Peters
Energy Assistance Program Analyst (DEA)

Sharnice Peters works as a LIHEAP Program Analyst in the Policy and Evaluation Branch, Division of Energy Assistance (DEA) within the Office of Community Services (OCS). Ms. Peters currently manages two OCS contracts responsible for identifying training needs, providing training and technical assistance to Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) state, territory and tribal grantees, as well as other critical LIHEAP grantee training tasks. In addition, Sharnice frequently collaborates with DEA Operations staff to conduct model plan reviews, onsite grantee monitoring visits and regular technical assistance to current and prospective LIHEAP recipients.

Prior to joining the OCS team, Sharnice began her federal career over eight years ago at the Headquarters of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers where she supported various programs focusing on establishing housing for active duty members and their families, as well as upholding equal employment opportunities. Ms. Peters later joined the Administration of Children and Families (ACF), Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) where she was working as a Budget analyst for the Office of the Director, a Program Analyst for the Division of Refugee Assistance (DRA) and Data Analyst for the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) program.

Sharnice has a B.S. in Psychology from Bowie State University and enjoys engaging in communities activities in her leisure time.

Vikki Pretlow
Energy Assistance Program Specialist (DEA)

Vikki Pretlow started as an Energy Assistance Program Specialist within the Operations Branch of DEA in October 2016. She is the main point of contact for state and tribal LIHEAP grantees in Regions VII and VIII.

Prior to joining DEA, Ms. Pretlow spent nearly eight years as a Program Specialist in the Office of Head Start (OHS). While at OHS, she managed a grant portfolio consisting of American Indian Head Start and

Early Head Start grants in New Mexico and Texas. She has also worked as a Senior Finance Officer at World Vision, Inc., in Washington, DC and an Accountant with ChildFund International in Richmond, VA.

Ms. Pretlow received her Bachelors of Business Administration with a concentration in Finance and her Masters of Business Administration with a concentration in International Business both from Howard University. She enjoys traveling and spending her free time with her nieces and nephew. She can be reached at Vikki.Pretlow@acf.hhs.gov or 202-205-9901.

Josephine Rago-Adia
Energy Assistance Program Specialist (DEA)

Josephine (“Jojie”) Rago-Adia is assigned as the LIHEAP Regional Program Liaison for Regions 2, 4 & 9 and is responsible for program administration of 75+ state, territorial and tribal LIHEAP grants that includes plan reviews, technical assistance to grantees, program compliance assessments, and providing guidance to the public seeking LIHEAP assistance or information. Josephine has 25+ years of experience both in the government and non-profit sectors. She has a subject matter expertise in the following areas: management of various government and nonprofit human services including federal grant management and contract acquisition, nonprofit capacity building, coalition building, administration of county substance abuse prevention and treatment programs, tertiary hospital administration and local government social welfare programs. She graduated with a degree of Master of Social Work and earned several work related certifications and post graduate courses.

Akm Rahman
Energy Program Operations Branch Chief (DEA)

Akm Rahman serves as the Program Operations Branch Chief within the Division of Energy Assistance (DEA), Office of Community Services (OCS). He manages the Operations team, which is responsible for monitoring, conducting plan reviews, and providing training and technical assistance to Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) state, territory and tribal grantees. Mr. Rahman’s team is currently comprised of four Energy Assistance Program Specialists who are DEA’s primary liaisons to directly-funded LIHEAP grantees located in 10 ACF Regions.

Prior to joining OCS, he worked for 22 years in various positions with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Housing and Community Development, covering both LIHEAP and the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program. Mr. Rahman served as the Massachusetts representative to the LIHEAP Performance Measures Implementation Work Group (PMIWG) from 2010 to 2014 and on the LIHEAP Program Integrity Work Group in 2011, providing OCS with recommendations for how to strengthen outcome-based performance management and program controls to avoid improper payments.

Mr. Rahman holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts degree in political science.

Kate Thomas
Energy Assistance Program Specialist (DEA)

Kate Thomas is an Energy Assistance Program Specialist for the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services, Division of Energy Assistance (ACF/OCS/DEA). She manages a portfolio of state and tribal grantees in Regions 3 & 6 and has more than 10 years of experience working with the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Prior to joining OCS, Ms. Thomas was a program manager at a Community Action Agency where she administered the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, the Weatherization Assistance Program, the Community Services Block Grant and the implementation of the Affordable Care Act in nine counties.

Ms. Thomas also served as the Director of Outreach and Special Projects at a state community action association for 4 years, where she conducted monitoring, training and technical assistance. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Kentucky and has earned several work-related certifications. She loves exercise, gourmet food, and spending time with her three year old daughter, and her husband, Rob. She can be reached at Kate.Thomas@acf.hhs.gov or 202-690-5737.

John Thompson
Auditor (DEA)

John serves as a federal auditor for the Division of Energy Assistance with LIHEAP. He has over 20 years of progressive accounting, finance and budgeting experience working within the federal, non-profit, and corporate sectors. Before joining the LIHEAP team in September 2015, he spent two years as an Auditor (federal contractor) in OCS for the Division of State Assistance working on the Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG). John has a Bachelor's degree in Accounting and a Master's degree in Business Administration.

Patrice West
Energy Assistance Program Specialist (DEA)

Patrice West is an Energy Assistance Program Specialist for the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services, Division of Energy Assistance (ACF/OCS/DEA) with over ten years of Federal Government experience. She is the Federal liaison for Regions I, V, and X for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). She has many years of program management expertise to include conducting desk and on-site monitoring to evaluate the performance of grantees and providing technical assistance to improve program deficiencies and performance.

She is a graduate of George Mason University, where she earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology. In her leisure time, she enjoys traveling and spending time with her family.